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SUBJECT: NIGERIA NATIONWIDE STRIKE SITREP #1 - OCTOBER 11

REF: LAGOS 2068

1. SUMMARY. Two days before a planned nation-wide stay-at-home strike, the State Security Service (SSS) detained and then released National Labor Congress (NLC) President Adams Oshiomhole in Abuja. According to the press, Oshiomhole alleged he was "manhandled" during his brief detention. The strike commenced October 11 as planned and is thus far being observed widely. Most schools and businesses are closed. Oil companies are running limited operations, but say production has not been affected. President Obasanjo has reportedly formed a 32-member committee, including labor, to examine the fuel price issue, which led to the strike. Relatively low-level sporadic violence and harassment have been reported. End summary.

NLC President Oshiomhole Detained and Released

2. The State Security Service (SSS) arrested NLC President Adams Oshiomhole at the Abuja airport on Saturday. According to the press, Oshiomhole alleges he was "manhandled" by the security services before being released. Press accounts of the extent of Oshiomhole's injuries varied widely, ranging from a spike in blood pressure to a dislocated leg. Numerous political and civil society figures condemned Oshiomhole's arrest.

Nationwide Strike Commences,
Widespread and Mostly Peacefully

3. The nationwide stay-at-home strike commenced as planned, October 11. There is widespread observance of the strike throughout southern Nigeria. Most schools and businesses are closed. Very little commercial transportation is available. While some senior executives are able to report to work, the vast majority of workers, who depend on public transportation could not go to work, even if they so desired. Most businesses are expected to re-open after 4:00 p.m.

4. The first phase of the strike is planned to last until October 14. The strike will be suspended for two weeks to provide government time to roll back the price increase as well as to give the populace a respite. If the price increase is not retracted after two weeks, the strike will resume indefinitely. Labor leaders also reserved the right to extend the initial four-day strike should there be clashes between security forces and labor activists resulting in casualties.

Some Key Sectors Uninterrupted

5. Although some oil companies are operating with skeletal staffs, executives tell us that oil production has not been affected. International airlines at Murtala Muhammed International Airport (MMIA) also continue to operate normally. Most domestic airlines appear to have operated out of MMIA today, though there were unconfirmed reports of aviation fuel rationing. The Warri airport was reported closed.

GON - Labor Talks in the Offing ?

6. Television news reported that President Obasanjo has formed a 32-member committee to examine the fuel price issue. The committee consists of representatives of labor, government, and civil society, as well as the oil and gas and manufacturing industries.

7. Post also received reports that Obasanjo has scheduled a stakeholders meeting. According to these as of yet unconfirmed reports, Oshiomhole will lead the labor team, and Obasanjo will head the government's delegation.

(Comment: Currently, we do not know if the 32-person committee and the stakeholder meeting are one and the same. End Comment.)

Strike Reports from the Field in Southern Nigeria

Lagos

18. Most of Lagos is peaceful, with incidents of violence in a few areas. A heavy police presence was reported around the city. Schools are closed and few private or commercial vehicles are operating. Most gas stations are closed.

19. National Electric Power Authority employees reported to work. The Lagos office of the Central Bank of Nigeria is open. Commercial banks are opened with a skeletal staff; few customers are demanding service. The Nigerian stock exchange is open.

10. NLC teams are on the streets to assess the extent of compliance with the strike. "Area boys" flying NLC flags are reported to have hijacked commercial buses in some areas and used them to harass motorists found on the road. No incidents have been reported on Victoria and Ikoyi Islands; movement on the islands is not expected to be a problem.

Port Harcourt

11. The strike appears to be progressing peacefully in the city. Police made public announcements in the morning warning people not to gather or rally. There is little vehicular traffic. The oil unions, NUPENG and PENGASSAN, said their members are observing the strike, except for essential workers. Oil companies are operating with skeletal staffs. Production has not been affected thus far.

Warri

12. Few motorists are on the roads. The airport is closed. NUPENG and PENGASSAN members are observing the strike, except for essential workers. Banks are not servicing customers. Public schools are closed. Private schools are open with minimal staffing. The Delta Broadcasting Service is not operating.

Escravos

13. Oil facilities at Escravos are operating normally.

Bayelsa

14. Schools are closed. Most shops and offices are closed to customers. Banks are not attending customers. Some private hospitals are closed. Police presence is heavy in strategic locations, around the capital Yenogoa.

Calabar

15. The city is quiet. Most businesses are closed.

Ibadan

16. The city is peaceful. Many informal sector businesses (produce stands, etc.) are operating. Schools are closed.

Onitsha

17. People are moving freely. Business is as usual.

Enugu

18. Few vehicles are on the road. Some markets and businesses are open. Commuters are moving undisturbed. The State Civil Secretariat is closed. Civil servants have gone home. School

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children who went to school in the morning returned home because teachers would not teach.

Benin City

19. University students are making bonfires in front of their campus, while police officers on patrol are removing fires from the roads. Businesses are closed, but no reports have been received of people being molested. Police are deployed to strategic locations around the city.

BROWNE